

CONSUMER ALERT

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection datcp.wisconsin.gov



Utility Scams Target Wisconsin Small Businesses

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MADISON – Wisconsin small businesses are receiving intimidating calls about overdue bills from scammers claiming to be with the local utility. The scammers threaten the business with a cancellation of services unless they make an immediate payment by wire transfer or prepaid debit card. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) asks Wisconsin businesses to be on the lookout for these calls and to contact their utility providers directly if they have questions about their bills or recent payments.

DATCP's Consumer Hotline has fielded a number of recent inquiries about these calls from businesses throughout the state – mainly in the southeast region and the Stevens Point area. In some cases, scammers may spoof the caller ID data that appears on the businesses' phones, causing the readouts to display the name and phone number of the local utility company. Callers may also use fake employee ID codes and may have researched the addresses and contact names for the businesses they target.

Utility scams also target consumers, so consumers should also be aware that this scam is underway and be on the lookout for similar calls.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Information Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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